



RHONDDA CYNON TAF

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

Minutes of the hybrid meeting of the Council held on Wednesday, 12 July 2023 at 4.00 pm.

This meeting was live streamed, details of which can be accessed [here](#)

County Borough Councillors – The following Councillors were present in the Council Chamber:-

Councillor G Hughes (Chair)

Councillor Sheryl Evans	Councillor B Stephens
Councillor R Bevan	Councillor S Bradwick
Councillor J Brencher	Councillor G Caple
Councillor J Cook	Councillor A Crimmings
Councillor R Davis	Councillor J Edwards
Councillor L Ellis	Councillor S Emanuel
Councillor G Jones	Councillor B Harris
Councillor W Jones	Councillor G Holmes
Councillor W Lewis	Councillor W Hughes
Councillor C Leyshon	Councillor G O Jones
Councillor C Lises	Councillor M Maohoub
Councillor C Middle	Councillor A Morgan
Councillor S Morgans	Councillor C Preedy
Councillor G Stacey	Councillor S Rees
Councillor L Tomkinson	Councillor J Smith
Councillor M Webber	Councillor G Warren
	Councillor R Yeo

The following Councillors were present online:-

Councillor M Ashford	Councillor J Barton
Councillor V Dunn	Councillor A Dennis
Councillor A S Fox	Councillor R Evans
Councillor D Evans	Councillor D Grehan
Councillor S Hickman	Councillor H Gronow
Councillor G Hopkins	Councillor R Lewis
Councillor A Roberts	Councillor D Owen-Jones
Councillor D Parkin	Councillor C Preedy
Councillor W Treeby	Councillor A Rogers
Councillor K Webb	Councillor D Williams
Councillor T Williams	Councillor R Williams
	Councillor D Wood

Officers in attendance

Mr P Mee, Chief Executive
Mr B Davies, Group Director of Finance, Digital & Frontline Services
Mr R Evans, Director of Human Resources
Mr S Gale, Director of Prosperity & Development
Mr C Hanagan, Service Director of Democratic Services & Communication
Mr A Wilkins, Director of Legal Services and Democratic Services

Officers from Trivallis

Mr D Forbes, Chief Executive
Mr N Beckett, Chair of the Board
Mr K Montague, Executive Director of Communities
Ms L Pinney, Executive Director of Resources
Mr D Davies, Corporate Director, Repairs
Ms T Hawkins, Corporate Director, Neighbourhoods

Apologies for absence

Councillor L Addiscott	Councillor J Bonetto
Councillor E L Dunning	Councillor A J Ellis
Councillor P Evans	Councillor S Evans
Councillor K Johnson	Councillor K Morgan
Councillor N H Morgan	Councillor M Norris
Councillor W Owen	Councillor S Powderhill
Councillor M Powell	Councillor G E Williams

23 Declaration of Interest

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, the following declarations were made pertaining to the agenda:

County Borough Councillor C Middle declared a personal interest – “I have been appointed by the Council to the Board of Trivallis but this has not yet been endorsed by Trivallis”.

County Borough Councillor S Emmanuel declared a personal and prejudicial interest- “I am a paid employee of Trivallis and I will preclude myself for the remainder of the this item”

County Borough Councillor A S Fox declared a personal interest – “My partner works for the organisation presenting at the meeting”.

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The Presiding Member introduced the representatives from Trivallis and advised Members that they will be covering items as indicated on the agenda.

The Chief Executive, Mr D Forbes introduced himself and his colleagues Mr N Beckett, Chair of the Board, Mr K Montague, Executive Director of Communities, Ms L Pinney, Executive Director Finance & Resources as well as other colleagues who were present to answer any queries relating to their specific roles.

The Chief Executive provided an overview of the key areas they intended on addressing with Members such as service challenges, capacity for investment and successes. He advised that the team at Corporate Director level is new which was now clear in its roles and its intention to forge good relationships with its external partners such as the Council.

Through the aid of PowerPoint slides the Chief Executive and attending

representatives presented an overview of key matters under the following headings:

- How far we have come
- Challenges – Repairs
- Challenges – Neighbourhoods & Support Services
- Improved Services
- Supporting Growth in RCT
- Communications

Following the presentation, the Leader of the Council thanked the representatives of Trivallis for attending Full Council. The Leader stressed the importance of Trivallis fostering good relationships with Elected Members who are accountable to their residents and who need to raise concerns, from time to time, with Trivallis.

The Leader commented that issues relating to anti-social behaviour had previously been difficult to the point where he felt Trivallis has lost control of its Estates in certain areas, but recent work involving the Police, RCT Council and other partners to directly address the serious anti-social behaviour concerns has brought about improvements (although the Leader acknowledged there were some areas which still required attention).

The Leader referred to the following concerns, an open and unaddressed backlog of maintenance and repairs, response times, financial and operational issues, general estate management and he added that key to resolving these issues is that Trivallis builds and maintains relationships with Elected Members. He commented that following an extensive period of time where concerns have been raised with Trivallis and following discussions between the Council and Welsh Government, fundamental questions would need to be raised by the Council should improvements in these areas not be forthcoming. However, the Leader felt confident that this would not be the case, with the new senior leadership team in place and with the commitment of improved communication between the two organisations.

The Chief Executive, Mr D Forbes responded to the queries raised by the Leader and he stressed that relationships with Elected Members would be strengthened in areas such as the planned walkabouts with Trivallis Officers and local Members to improve collaboration between the two partners.

The Presiding Member opened up the opportunity for questions from the Group Leaders (or nominated Members).

County Borough Councillor W Jones raised concern about a specific case within his ward which the Executive Director of Communities advised would be addressed following the meeting.

The Group Leader of the Conservative Group, Councillor S Trask asked whether Housing Officers from Trivallis could attend the PACT meetings in his ward to

listen and address tenant's issues in person. He added that queries are currently not being resolved and response times are between 2-3 weeks. The Executive Director of Communities gave his personal commitment that a Neighbourhood Area Manager would attend the PACT meetings in the future as listening to people was of the utmost importance.

At this point in the proceedings, the Presiding Member announced that the Council meeting at 5pm would commence at 5.15pm in order to allow all Members the opportunity to put their questions to Trivallis. The following Members posed questions as follows:

Councillor S Rees, as Chair of the Planning & Development Committee commented that the committee face significant public opposition to many of the housing proposals from Trivallis which can be, on times hostile. Where communities are accepting social housing they often ask that the letting policy ensures that tenants are over 55 years old. How does Trivallis engage with local people to ensure appropriate locations and housing types is provided and how do they win over hearts and minds to buy into Trivallis developments?

Councillor A Rogers thanked Trivallis for hosting an event in his ward in April where they offered advice on the cost-of-living crisis to local residents. However, he pointed out that the response to residents' queries is frustrating and asked what arrangements are in place to record and track queries and are reference numbers used as proof as what needs to be actioned?

Councillor D Owen-Jones raised concern regarding the cleanliness of the estates in his ward and commented that the Council is tasked with removing unwanted furniture from alleyways and car parks. Can Trivallis rectify this longstanding problem, the disrepair and collapsing garages and the kitchen/bathroom project which is five years behind target.

The Executive Director of Communities advised that environmental issues and fly tipping are a priority for Trivallis. He added that Trivallis has established a cross organisational working group to address these issues, managing rubbish and gardens on the Estates and being more proactive with enforcement and at the design stages for new developments such as the location of bin stores. He confirmed that Trivallis receives over 1,000 complaints a year concerning the state of gardens, issues which can relate to lifestyle or resident's vulnerabilities. He advised that Councillor Owen-Jones use the dedicated Member enquiries line to ensure the appropriate level of engagement is in place between him and his local area coordinator.

The Executive Director of Communities advised that Trivallis uses the dynamic system, which is a Microsoft system, to log and record all queries with written correspondence being provided to all tenants. To improve the service and particularly for tenants under the age of 55 years old, Trivallis is looking to develop a tenant's app, which will be rolled out in September this year to enable queries to be recorded online and for tenants to be able track their repairs at their leisure. However, work is still being conducted to enhance the call centre experience and written correspondence times for those who choose not to use the app.

The Executive Director of Communities advised that there is opposition to social housing, Trivallis is led by the market needs assessment that the local authority provides and subsequently what is built is in direct response to the local needs

of the community. He added that Trivallis responds to the local need and that has to be evidenced as part of the planned development programme. He commented that as much pre-engagement is undertaken as possible but acknowledged that much more can be done to settle tenants and integrate them into the community through local community groups and through the local authority.

Councillor C Lises thanked Trivallis for their presentation and for their most recent publication and communication with all Elected Members. Councillor Lises highlighted the apology that Trivallis has issued within its publication and hoped this would be extended through its communication with its tenants. Councillor Lises also welcomed the forthcoming tenants app.

Councillor A Roberts asked why does Trivallis have the highest rate of social housing rent in Wales, in one of the poorest areas of Wales?

Councillor D Williams raised two concerns, the first around the six garages that were built by Trivallis at the same time as the community centre 12 years ago but still remain empty, despite requests from the centre to use them for storage. The second concern about the garages to the rear of the club in Glyncoch which are in disrepair and attract anti-social behaviour on a regular basis. Councillor Williams stated that the garages were due to be demolished two years ago but are still in place and are the cause of much anti-social behaviour.

Councillor M Webber commented that throughout Covid, she engaged regularly with all other Housing Associations except Trivallis at a time when communication was crucial. She commented that five years ago, she contacted Trivallis about the poor state of garages in her ward, to be told that they were soon undertaking a garage review, but they remain empty and in the same poor state of repair. Councillor Webber also raised concern about issues relating to cavity wall insulation and stressed the importance of Trivallis engaging with Elected Members. In view of her own experiences, she concluded that there is still work to do, to improve communication and partnership working.

The Executive Director of Communities apologised for the lack of contact in responding to Councillor's Webber's complaint and he outlined the measures in place to address these issues going forward. He advised that over the next few months Trivallis would be looking to recruit an officer whose role would be to co-ordinate the community development activities. He advised that there would be an update with regards to two key common issues which had been raised in the meeting by Members, namely garages and cavity wall insulation.

Councillor G Hopkins raised a query in respect of the role Trivallis plays in the community common housing register and he asked, as a vital partner in the scheme what underpins it and can Trivallis suggest any ways it can be improved?

Councillor J Barton made the point that the Tenants App will not be appropriate for elderly tenants and asked what strategy Trivallis has in place for those long-term tenants having to deal with new, disruptive tenants who often make their lives a misery?

Councillor J Smith asked what policy does Trivallis have in place regarding fly tipping and issues around the creation of rat runs in gardens?

The Executive Director of Communities advised that it is in the tenants' agreement that they keep their garden in a good state of repair, but tenants can struggle due to ill health or a disability, but some tenants choose not to abide by the agreement at all. He commented that a more proactive approach needs to be adopted, so that problems can be identified early and support provided to navigate residents through their difficulties. He added that some barriers could be 'designed out' in the early design stages of new developments.

The Director advised that Trivallis has recently appointed two new officers to assist with response times, to deal with queries quickly and efficiently. In respect of the query regarding the common allocations policy, the Director confirmed that the relationship with the local authority is very good in managing the housing allocation and due to issues around mental health, cost of living crisis and the need for temporary accommodation, the allocation process requires a balanced approach, to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable tenants is met against sustainable communities. He suggested that it will be a challenge, but a joint approach will be required.

In conclusion, the Chief Executive, Mr D Forbes thanked Members for their engagement and questions, some of which would be addressed outside the meeting. He noted from the issues raised that the importance of the interaction on the estates is critical between the neighbourhood manager, neighbourhood coordinators and Elected Members and the engagement they have with their residents to overcome issues such as anti-social behaviour. He added that in certain cases it is balance, trying to support neighbours in a mediation role especially with covid and the cost-of-living crisis impacting and sometimes worsening existing issues within the neighbourhoods.

The Leader reiterated his thanks to the team from Trivallis as he noted common issues raised by Elected Members and the subsequent wider issues which would require improvements from Trivallis. The Leader emphasised the importance of making progress on key areas of concern but made it clear that these areas cannot be allowed to regress, that the issues experienced over the last 17 years need to be addressed and that the local authority will work closely with Trivallis to progress and deliver for Trivallis tenants across the county borough.

The Presiding Member thanked the representatives from Trivallis for their attendance and advised Members that any further questions can be passed on to them via the Council Business Unit.

This meeting closed at 5.00 pm

**Councillor G Hughes
Chair.**

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is also available in Welsh